



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE CRAYON.

VOL. I. NO. 24.

NEW YORK, JUNE 13, 1855.

\$3 PER ANNUM.

W. J. STILLMAN &amp; J. DURAND, EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, 237 BROADWAY, COR. OF PARK PLACE.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF ART.

VERY accurate ideas of the true ends of Art may be gathered from its limitations. The directions in which its range is most like that of Nature—infinite—and towards the unattainable, are those in which its pursuit evokes the noblest powers of human intellect, and are, therefore, the worthiest, though not those in which the greatest excellence can be manifested. There is a distinction which we have before alluded to, and which is a vital one in Art criticism—viz., that between *worthiness* and *excellence*. The latter means only the success of a work of Art in its aim, no matter how lofty or low that aim may be, when considered in a moral or intellectual point of view, whether it be the representation of the orgies of a company of bacchanals, or the devotions of the Suppliant of Gethsemane; the former is an expression only to be applied to that which would be noble, and grand, and true—and it is worthy, though this intention may be only indicated. *Excellence* depends on the *difficulty* of the thing attempted—*Worth* on the *nobility* of it. This, if remembered as a principle in criticism—if insisted on by the public and acted on by artists, would regenerate Art, and might well be borrowed in other branches of human endeavor.

The limitations of Art are shortest where the perfection is most easily attained. Thus we may imitate a piece of wood so precisely, that only touch or the microscope shall tell us that we are mistaken, when we thought the painting to be the thing itself, though they are placed side by side; but the light of Nature, her brilliancy of color, are things only to be suggested to the mind—not in any way realized to the eye; and thus the graining of the wood, though excellent, is considered, as Art, unworthy, while the attempt to paint the sun in the mid-sky is worthy, though our greatest success only amounts to a meagre statement of the facts of the phenomena which the sun presents to us, and devoid of that which is most characteristic of sun-light—its overpowering brilliancy. We shall not attempt to discuss the point, whether a quality can be considered worthy, *because* it is difficult of attainment. It is, doubtless, more noble

VOL. I. NO. XXIV.

to attempt a thing which we know will task our utmost ability, and demand the most determined effort, than to rest content to spend our time on the superficialities which require only a careless or imperfect application; but there may be something which shall be at once difficult and worthless when accomplished. There is a coincidence, to say the least, generally, between the things which are difficult, and the things which are noble.

The painting of flesh, for instance, presents two points of interest—the exact tint of flesh, and what artists call the quality of color, or its representation of the qualities by which flesh is distinguished from a wax imitation of it, the softness, elasticity, and semi-transparency of it. The former is easily attained by careful study, but the latter is so difficult, that very few artists have ever succeeded in it; and it so happens, that the latter is the more important, because it represents the distinguishing features of flesh, by which it is known from wax or wood. Again, in landscape, its light is of more value than its local color, and is also beyond the reach of the artist's materials. In both cases, the law of limitations which we have indicated above, acts justly.

There seems here to be an interference with the grounds we have continually assumed—that a work of Art is not to be judged with reference to its power, since the greatest power will most readily overcome difficulties, but the inconsistency is not real, being rather based on a partial use of the term "difficulty." We apply it generally to the obstacles in our way, when we would accomplish a certain purpose, whereas, the greatest difficulty in Art is to restrain our own tendencies to superficiality, and to keep a lofty purpose unbent. The more mechanical or even intellectual power by which we should not judge Art, is a different thing from that intensity of feeling by which we are enabled to overcome those nearest to insurmountable obstacles which exist in ourselves—our morallethargy, and our bluntness of perception. Therefore, taking it on the broadest grounds, our rule applies justly, for the limitations of Art lie furthest off in moral qualities, every difficulty to be met in the mechanical or intellectual departments being found in

the moral, in a degree comparable to the greater elevation of the moral. Where we have a hundred men who can raise themselves to intellectual greatness, we have scarcely one who is capable of reaching a commensurate moral elevation—and correspondingly of the intellectual and moral limitations of Art. When, therefore, we said that these would point us to the true ends of artistic effort, we stated a truth which may be taken with equal justice in its broadest scope, or in any particular province.

If applied to painting simply, or the merely technical part of Art, it is true, since *imitation*, the thing easiest of accomplishment, is really the meanest purpose the artist can devote himself to, and is, in fact, no legitimate object of his labors. The province of painting, then, is not to imitate, but to suggest—not to reproduce, but to represent to the mind, or appeal to the moral faculties—and in proportion as Art tends to the imitative, it is base though excellent, and as it aspires to the intellectual, and thence to the moral, it is noble, though imperfect in its attainment of the results it aims at.

## Reminiscences.

### CHARACTERISTICS.

THE chief use of looking back on the tablet of memory, is to recollect some incident or fact that may be entertaining, or worth recording. Familiar as we now are with the accommodations of gas-light, it is but a few years since it was a mystery and wonder to every one. It was invented by *Windsor*, and in 1802, I was in London, when he first exhibited it in Pall Mall. But, sixteen years before that time, an American artist suggested its introduction. *Mr. Trenchard*, the engraver, though of moderate ability in his Art, annually enjoyed a visit to London, and always, on his return, made it a point to visit my father, with news of the Arts, and especially of his preceptor, *Mr. West*. It was on one of those visits, in 1786, that *Mr. Trenchard* gave an account of an amusing exhibition by *Mr. Cartwright*, the inventor (or improver) of the musical glasses. When the charm of it began to diminish, he varied his entertainment by another novelty. On his table was displayed an apparatus of tubes, triangles, and revolving wheels, to exhibit the light of hydrogen gas, then only known by the name of *inflammable air*, made from water by means of iron borings

and sulphuric acid; which he explained, and collected the air in two large ox-bladders. To these he had connected flexible tubes, and others of tin, of glass, and of paper, which were carried around the cornice of the room, and thence finally to his apparatus, where he showed its effects when lighted, varying its pale, transparent bluish light, by causing it to assume the hues of red, and green, and white, which he accomplished by throwing on the flame various powders—the lighted jets of his wheels acquiring motion by pressure on the bladders. Hot and brilliant as this air could thus be made, he showed his astonished spectators that it was *cool*, as it passed through his tins; *colorless*, through his glass, and only made to *burn*, not the paper tubes, but at its exit into atmospheric air. After expatiating on this wonder, Mr. Trenchard remarked to my father, as I sat on a stool at his feet, that it was possible some chemist might discover a mode of making this air to produce a permanent white light, that could be conveyed through the streets of a city, as the water in Edinburgh then was, in tubes of earthenware. "You and I, Mr. Peale," said Mr. Trenchard, "will not live to see that day, but this boy may, perhaps, see it accomplished." His prediction was verified, by my being the first person in America to effect it. Dr. Kugler had invented a new mode of generating gas from tar and resin, and, with my brother Rubens, lighted the Philadelphia Museum, in the State House, in 1813. By the same means, I soon after lighted my picture gallery in Baltimore, with a magic ring of a hundred burners, regulated by a stop-cock in the corner of the room, lowering the jets to a circle of beautiful small pearls, and then gradually swelling them out to a full and brilliant blaze. The success of this enabled me to form the Baltimore Gas Company, and the theatre and main street of the city were the first to be lighted.

Many worthy persons, from honest motives of puritan simplicity or utilitarianism, have set their faces against the pretensions of the Fine Arts. This, however, is now passing away. When *Latrobe* had finished his beautiful edifice of the Pennsylvania Bank, then a rare architectural object in our country, he met a Friend, whom he led to a spot in Second street, as affording the most picturesque view of the building. "Friend *Latrobe*," said he, "thee may be proud of thy work, if thee will; but I am no friend to the Fine Arts—I am a friend to the coarse arts." This, *Latrobe* thought, was indeed a very *coarse* idea. Still, it may not be amiss to remark, that artists have done their country some collateral service. It was a portrait painter, *Robert Fulton*, that gave us the power of steam navigation. It was a portrait painter, *S. F. B. Morse*, that devised the magic electric telegraph. It was a portrait painter, *C. W. Peale*, that first made porcelain teeth for himself and a few friends. And I, though a portrait painter, lighted the first city with gas. This is no boast, but may be accepted as an atonement for the practice of a luxurious Art, which is now beginning to be appreciated, at least, as a handmaid to the Arts called useful—woodcuts, lithographs, and daguerreotypes serving to *inoculate* the people with a taste for the higher branches.

Here I might be permitted to add a note in favor of the Fine Arts—which, in Italy, are called the *beautiful*, and in Spain, the *noble* Arts—that if every vestige of them were destroyed, not only would be lost the mental enjoyments now found in numerous galleries and private collections, the pride of nations, and first objects of travel, but the mirrored likenesses of a host of human worthies and beloved fellow-beings; of interesting scenery, and certainly of historical incidents. This should be granted by every friend to the development of mind, the great gift of the Deity, who made everything *good* and *beautiful*, and who is not unaptly called the great Artist of the UNIVERSE!

My mental tablet carries me back to the period of 1783. After a distressing war of seven years, the peace then consummated, was celebrated by my father by a grand illumination of his house, the corner of Lombard and Third streets. The sashes of the windows being taken out, their places were filled with transparent allegorical paintings, to the great admiration of a popular and patriotic throng. I well remember seeing my angel-mother—my father's Madonna—sitting alone in the middle of the room, to watch the safety of the numerous candles of the illuminated scene. Not satisfied with this demonstration, my father, the revolutionary captain of '76, with but limited means, erected a magnificent triumphal arch across Market street, covered with transparent paintings, and with many ingenious devices—but, unfortunately, whilst he was in the upper story directing the discharge of rockets, the whole building was set on fire by the mis-movements of a drunken man, and my father, in falling to the ground, broke two of his ribs, a severe retribution for his patriotic zeal. The crowd of spectators was immense, and various robberies were committed in the confusion. We were somewhat amused, at a late hour, to see my father's pupil, Wm. Mercer, a deaf and dumb son of General Mercer, come home, wild with terror, being divested of his watch, and gold sleeve and knee buckles, and so much afraid of further injury, that we could not persuade him to go to his bed, as he thought he would be more safely hidden in the stable. This same Mr. Mercer, under my father's tuition, became an excellent portrait painter, and continued his profession till his death, a few years ago.

The last portrait of *Franklin* was begun in 1790, which my father was anxious to finish. I accompanied him to the old mansion, where we found the doctor confined to his room, in much pain, which he bore with philosophic patience, but had no hope of being able to give another sitting for his portrait; which I regretted the more, because in his confinement, his grey locks had grown long, and undulating gracefully over his shoulders, contrasted well with his venerable bald head. I never was so impressed with the interest of a human head! Ten days after this, he died, and at his funeral in the Friends' burial-ground, at least twenty thousand persons were present. I was seated on the brick wall, directly over the grave, and was so impressed with the awful and solemn ceremony, that when it was filled up, I remained in melancholy meditation on the

loss of such a man, unconscious of the dispersion of the vast multitude, till dark twilight found me there alone. I had never seen a corpse—I knew nothing of the dissecting room, and yet, for a few minutes, my thoughts ran upon the possibility of saving from the grave so precious a head! But to dig it up without detection—to sever it from the body, and take it home—impossible! I sickened with the discarded idea, and hastened home, not to speak to any one, but in silent grief to bed.

Phrenology was not then known, and no one talked of the interest in a skull. Thus susceptible of excitement, it is not surprising that I should afterwards take much interest in the study of heads, as they differed in man and other animals. *Lavater* and *Camper* were the only guides to my observations. In 1801, whilst painting the portrait of Doctor Priestley, I gave him some of my notions, which amused him, from their novelty, and he asked me what I supposed was indicated by a peculiar elevation on the summit of his head? Never having seen anything like it, I could form no idea of its meaning, if it had any—but, it is singular, that when I became acquainted with Doctor Gall, in 1812, I found it was marked by him as the organ of veneration.

I painted the portrait of Dr. Gall in Paris, because he had become a noted character. He wished to know my opinion of his system. I replied that I knew nothing, but wanted some account of it. He was glad to find an artist that did not know his system, but as a man of observation, he asked me to designate what struck me as *peculiar* in the formation of his head. I replied, "Its extraordinary breadth above the temples." His eyes sparkled as he ejaculated, "Combination—combination! Napoleon and I both have it *greater* than any two men in France."

Occupied in painting the portraits of distinguished men, I was desirous of adding to my collection that of the Emperor's surgeon, the celebrated *Dubois*—but he would not give his consent till he visited my atelier, to see the heads I already had painted. As he glanced at them he named them—"Cuvier, Bertholet, Saint Pierre, Gay Lussac, Humboldt, Gall"—then stepping back with a look of some dissatisfaction, but advancing, he added—"Yes—Gall—you did right to take *him*, because, although we smile at his fanciful theories, yet to him we owe ALL the knowledge we have of the brain."

Whatever truth there may be in the systems of phrenology, and the minuteness of their claims, it is certain that all artists, especially sculptors, necessarily form conclusions in its favor, without being bound to believe in every tenet. The numerous antique heads of Socrates, himself a sculptor, and those of other great philosophers, are all characterized with craniological accuracy—and nothing is more offensive in the work of a modern tyro in sculpture, than a mal-conformation of skull.

I heard the last lecture of *Spurzheim* at Boston, and could not but believe that his own noble head was a recommendation of his theory. I also attended the lectures of *Mr. Combe*, whose talent was to *report* the knowledge of others; for he, himself, appeared to me deficient in the perception of *form*, and he knew nothing of drawing.

As he had a most respectable class at his lectures, I was desirous of making an experiment in relation to my own Art, and to ascertain what impression could be produced by the exhibition of pictures *singly*, under a good light. For this purpose I wrote an ironical lecture against phrenology, and Mr. Combe announced to his class that I would lecture to them. There was, consequently a full attendance; and at the close of my lecture, as I had no plaster casts and skulls to show, I removed a curtain from my copy of *Raphael's* Madonna della Seggiola, and presented it as the manifestation of maternal affection—and then uncovered a copy I had made from a beautiful head by *Greuze*—giving a short account of each picture. They were greeted with universal applause—and the company *lingered* to look, till I covered up the paintings. The experiment was successful. Its efficacy is now employed in the exhibition of beautiful and instructive panoramas.

REMBRANDT PEALE.

#### FOURIER ET HOC GENUS OMNE.

THE plant of civilization, like other plants, springs from God's ground, it has its roots in the business and bosoms of men, throws into the sunshine and the air the stem and branches of its toil and its culture, blossoms in poetry and heroism, and bears at length the fruit of science, which is a forbidden fruit only in its pulp and rind—its seeds are wisdom—not all wisdom, for of the seed itself the germ is small part, since there, too, is a rind and a pulp, even the divine embryo of future betterment therein wrapped and conserved cannot quicken unless it die, for this is not a world for Eureka! and exultation, but for courage, toil and brotherly love.

Herein do I find the mischiefs of the older world that they have sought to establish, check, and stop the rolling ball that circles round the sun; and truly they were giants, for though they could not stop they have shaken it, which is enough, when you consider who made it and set it going.

The higher development of each civilization is a self-criticism, and along with the condemnation of the past, neatly packed in silken integument, lies a promise of better things. But this divine verdict towering at the top of the plant can only wither by staying there; it must be blown, or shaken, or plucked thence and consigned to that earth which we all despise so truly—the hearts and heads of common men—there must it find the soil and moisture, blood and tears, which burst its rind and evolve the godhead within.

The philosophy of Aristotle, the method of Bacon, the politics of Machiavelli, the social contract of Rousseau, the Tirannide of Alfieri, and the philanthropy of Wilberforce, have by turns gotten into the brains and arms of men who knew not how to write, else had they been (pardon a pathological illustration), mere ejaculations of the brain.

The rhetorical beauty and elaborate putting out of hand of these gentlemen's performances marks their position in the career of culture, not roots but lordly seed cups are they. They have no filaments that pierce the solid earth with a diameter of a spider's web, yet absorb. Not cush-

ioned in cool halls sacred to stillness and fragrant with Russia binding, do men found dynasties. The sign-manual of the Grand Turk hath a blood relationship with these cunning fruits of the human mind, these theories incarnate in rhetoric. It also is symmetrical, elaborate, pleasing to the eye, but if you will mark well its contour and features, you shall yet see the bloody hand laid down on the sheepskin—which was its prototype.

Study thou thy botanies! it is well! but still shalt thou make the good Scotch gardener smile at thy shortcomings; study thou thy anatomies! it is well! still shall a Silesian peasant cure while thy utmost book only sufficeth to kill; study thou thy electricities and chemistry in thy Institut and Royal College, yet shall one American painter alone, report thee to the antipodes, another row thee thither; study thou thy mechanics and forces and mathematics, build thy practical navies and thy yachts made by scientific norma to outstrip the world, yet shall the shrewd eye and rule of thumb suffice to leave thee seven miles to leeward, while thy queen sees the discomfiture through her tears.

The voyage of discovery and improvement hath been made with a captain who came in through the cabin windows, but there were good dumb boatswains on board, who managed to say yes and no.

We who cut stone, temper our tools and choose our blocks by rules that be not in the Encyclopædia or Conversations Lexicon. We are jealous of these knowledges, many of them are vague, dim, guess-work to appearance. When the book-maker doth cross-question us to extract the kernel of our toil, we hang the lip and look silly; under the garb of inarticulate stupidity lies a grim determination that the idler enter not into our rest.

When the great monolite was erected, by Fontana, if I remember, in the square of St. Peters, it was determined to make that job an incarnation of the means and knowledge of Rome. This was noble and truly human! They arranged their tackle, *spotted* their hands, and a papal edict promised death to any man who should utter a word, until the engineer gave the signal that all risk was past. The square was full of admiring eyes and beating hearts; slowly that huge crystalization of Egyptian sweat rose on its basis—five degrees, ten, fifteen, twenty, alas! There be signs of faltering; no matter! twenty-five, thirty, forty, forty-three—there is trouble! Lo! the hempen cables that, like faithful servants, have thus far obeyed the mathematician, have suddenly lugged out an order from Almighty God not to hold that base steady any longer on those terms. The engineer who knew the hand-writing, trembled; the obedient masons and *faccini* looked down, then eyed the threatening mass. The question was, which way it would fall. Among the crowd, silence! The sun poured down on the stillness and the despair. Suddenly from out that breathless mass of men there came a voice, clear as the archangel's trumpet, *WET THE ROPES!* The crowd turned. Tiptoe on a post stood a fellow in a jacket of humble homespun, his eye full of fire, and his hair rising with the sense of his responsibility; from engineer to humblest *faccino* that order got instant obedience, the cables which only wanted the water

cure, bit fiercely into the granite, the windlasses were manned once more, the obelisk rose to its post and took its stand for centuries. It is well that there be order and discipline and even the pain of death for their sake, because the divine man is not stopped by the latter, in that he bears eternal life, and the sense thereof in his own bosom.

Thou whose "Lectures and Miscellanies" do fill my mind with a certain sense of roundness, finish, and courtly presentableness, I pray thee in the fervor of thy faith to read them in German beerhouse, and amid throngs of low-browed and big-jawed Hibernians, stepping here on shore with vast appetite, a faith that removes mountains, and imperfect, insufficient knowledge of Paley and Chesterfield. There in the eye that lights all that bone and muscle shalt thou see as in a glass, darkly, no dearth of hard knocks and bloody noses, standing in dread array between thy silk stocking theory and any practical, bearable system of living together based thereon. I do not mean to deny that thou hast found a sibylline leaf and deciphered it well, but there were other sibylline leaves, which were burned before pride took the alarm, and the secret of making men learn *lovingly*—was in those that were burned!

Humbly do I recognize in thy hand the divine hammer that fashions me, as with resolute grip thou holdest me upon the anvil, but the anvil below strikes as hard as thou above, and is steadier, for it stands on that which talk cannot reach. Not from Pliny's page or Buffon's elaborations did man learn the mystery of tiger's tooth or faugs of deadly rattlesnake. The nightshade "never told her love" to the eye, 'twas in the writhing stomach of experiment that she talked the true, Catholic tongue, English to Englishmen, French to Frenchmen, and they who saw believed.

Well do I know that God's truth is a two-edged sword, even such of it as man may wield, but it is a sword whose handle burns as fiercely as its edge doth cut, and knowing men pass it more quickly than the bottle.

Let us make, then, a grand experiment, let us unite as one man from Maine to Georgia, we who have read and have seen, and let us seek to change the Anglo Saxon hat, or wrench one button from the empire of Brummagem fashion and transatlantic dictation, let us see "*quid valeant quid recusent humeri*," let us test our influence with the masses, by a garb made according to the demonstrable requirement of climate and convenience. Verily, I say to thee, that Wall street will greet us with a guffaw, the maids will titter at us through the blinds, the rowdies will hustle us in the thoroughfare, and even the good quiet man will see these things through the plate glass of his chariot, and say *debaxo de su manto*—"Sarved 'em right." While thou warmest in the promise of order, quiet content, and cheerful toil, lo! the Catholic priest hath already occupied their hearts with the "promise to pay," whose Biddle has yet to find his Andrew, and whose god-like defenders and constitutional expounders mean to fight for it at last, and not "obsolete" it. Not by rushing madly at the differential calculus, or wielding algebraic signs or logarithmic compend, is the traffic of the world done, because then